



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



BOWEN PARTICIPATES IN WALK FOR THE FALLEN

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen was one of over 50 participants in Pierre's first *Walk for the Fallen*. The event honored service men and women who died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Names of soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines from South Dakota who were killed in combat since 9/11 were read. Then walkers began their trek around the Capitol, the Governor's Mansion and the lake.

Similar runs and walks have been held across the country since 2008, with more than 50,000 people participating.

Brad Steckelberg, who helped set up similar events in Sioux Falls the past four years, organized the walk. His step-brother, Staff Sgt. Jeremy Vrooman, was killed in Iraq in 2008. During the walk Steckelberg carried the boots of the soldier who dragged Vrooman to the helicopter after he was hit.

"It was an honor to memorialize these fallen heroes of the great state of South Dakota," said Bowen. Bowen, who served four years in the Navy and eight years in the South Dakota National Guard, including a deployment to Iraq, was close friends with two of the fallen heroes.



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Heroes Among Us—
showcasing 125 South Dakota veterans.



JACOBY PRESENTED AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE MEDAL

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman was privileged to be one of the dignitaries to honor Korean War Veteran Eugene Jacoby of Sturgis.

Jacoby, a native of the Mitchell area, was presented the Ambassador for Peace Medal from Sunny Lee, representative of the Republic of Korea.

The medal is an expression of appreciation from the Korean government to U.S. service men and women who served in the Korean conflict.

To be eligible, the veteran must have served during the Korean War from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953.

"it was an honor to be a part of this ceremony," said Secretary Zimmerman. "America's military veterans have served our country — they did their part, now it's time to honor their missions and accomplishments."



LOCAL SERVICE MEMBERS HONORED AT CENTRAL STATES FAIR

Five South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers and five Airmen from Ellsworth Air Force Base were recognized for their service during the Range Days Rodeo at the Central States Fair Military Appreciation Night in Rapid City, Aug. 21.

Each year Military Appreciation Night recognizes outstanding service members from the South Dakota National Guard and Ellsworth Air Force Base.



SDDVA SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN ADDRESSES NATIONAL EOD ASSOCIATION

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman addressed the National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Association at their conference in Rapid City.

During his address, Zimmerman briefed participants on veteran population in South Dakota, Operation RAV, and the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Formed in 1988, the National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Association is a non-profit fraternal and educational organization of active and formerly active members of the military services of the United States of America who have served in military Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) positions.



VSO ANNUAL BENEFIT SCHOOL

Last week county and tribal veterans' service officers (CTVSO) gathered in Pierre for their annual benefit school. The annual event is organized by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the South Dakota Veterans Service Officers Association. This year's week-long conference included National Accreditation Training and had 156 attendees from South Dakota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming participating.

"Bringing NACVSO training to South Dakota for the Department's annual training certification school is a monumental event," said SDDVA Deputy Secretary Pollard. "We continue to build and strengthen the relationship that we share with our county and tribal partners."

"The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and our VSOs are here to serve all veterans from every conflict and every generation who have defended our nation and the American way of life," said Larry Zimmerman, SDDVA Secretary. "It is important to recognize individuals who provide outstanding service. Working together, we will continue to be the voice for South Dakota's veterans and their families and we will reach all of them."

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs staff and CVSOs were recognized for their dedication to serving veterans and veterans' families at an awards program Monday, Aug. 25, in Pierre.

Gordon Richard of Redfield received the CTVSO of the Year Award, which distinguished Gordon as the 2014 County Veterans Service Officer of the Year. As the VSO for Spink County, Gordon was recognized for his outstanding commitment to veterans, communication with veterans, outreach coordination, and his leadership in bringing the national training to South Dakota.



Tom Sparrow of Viborg received the Outreach of the Year Award, which distinguished Tom as the 2014 leader in conducting outreach activities. As the VSO for Turner County, Tom was recognized for his outstanding commitment to veterans, coordination of outreach events, and his leadership in Operation RAV (Reaching all Veterans).

Jamie Guffey, veterans services case-worker for the Pennington County VSO office, was awarded the 2014 Partner of the Year Award. Guffey was recognized for her compassion, commitment,

knowledge, and professionalism when assisting South Dakota's veterans.

Audry Ricketts, SDDVA public information officer was awarded the SDDVA 2014 Department Staff of the Year Award. Ricketts was recognized for her commitment to their partners, her leadership and her communication skills.

Former VSO's Tom Gohn (Brown County), Robert Arneson (Hamlin County), Charles Haffner (Yankton County), Don Thomson (Lake County), Archie Hopkins (Oglala Sioux Tribe) and Larry Person (SDDVA) were recognized by the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association for their years of service to South Dakota's veterans.



VA RELEASES NEW VERSION OF THE GI BILL® COMPARISON TOOL

The VA has launched an improved version of the [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#), which was first launched in February 2014. The GI Bill Comparison Tool is designed to make it easier for veterans, servicemembers, and dependents to estimate their GI Bill education benefits and learn more about the VA's approved college, university, and other education and training programs across the country. It also provides key information about college affordability and value so beneficiaries can choose the best education program to meet their needs.

The updated version of the GI Bill Comparison Tool has new functionality, including a more robust GI Bill benefits calculator and additional information pertinent to the veteran population (e.g., identifies schools with student veteran groups, VetSuccess on Campus program, and those that have agreed to the [8 Keys to Success](#)). The GI Bill calculator provides a personalized estimate of Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition and fee, housing allowance, and book stipend benefits that would potentially be paid to the student. The calculator prepopulates the tuition and fee estimates from the ED's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The veteran indicator section now contains new information on schools' student veterans groups, VetSuccess on Campus program and Yellow Ribbon agreement status.

The GI Bill Comparison Tool is one item in a series of resources the VA has launched in response to the President's Executive Order 13607, signed April 27, 2012, which directs agencies to implement and promote "Principles of Excellence" for educational institutions that interact with veterans, servicemembers and their families; and to ensure beneficiaries have the information they need to make informed choices about VA education benefits and approved programs. As students return to school this fall, the VA is committed to providing the support and information they need to succeed.

Since April 2012, the VA has deployed the GI Bill Comparison Tool, the [GI Bill Feedback System](#), and offered a free academic-readiness tool online. In addition, the VA, the Department of Education and Department of Defense have agreed to new veteran-specific outcome measures and signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange information, which will ensure greater compliance from schools receiving military and federal education benefits. The VA successfully trademarked GI Bill to prevent its fraudulent use for recruiting purposes and to protect this publicly-owned intellectual property. Post-9/11 GI Bill is a comprehensive education benefit created by Congress in 2008. veterans and servicemembers who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since Sept. 10, 2001 are eligible for the benefit. The Veterans Benefits Administration, which administers the Post-9/11 GI Bill program, has distributed more than \$43 billion in the form of tuition and other education-related payments to more than one million Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families; and to the universities, colleges, and trade schools they attend. The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be found at: <http://gibill.va.gov/comparison/>



2014 STATE AMERICAN LEGION GOLF TOURNEY

Legion Family Golfers, it is time to register for the 2014 State Legion Golf Tournament, September 13-14, 2014. The event will be hosted by the Henry G. Fix Post # 23, Garretson and will be played at the River Ridge Golf Club, one mile south of Garretson.

This fun event will include 18-holes of golf with carts each day, a banquet meal on Saturday evening, pin prizes, placing prizes and door prizes. The 4-person scramble format will be used. Bring your team of four, or be placed in a team with others. Participation in the tournament is open to all members of the American Legion Family. The River Ridge has an ample number of quality carts. Private carts are permitted, but with no reduction in fee. The registration fee is \$90 per golfer. (Please register by September 5th.)

For more information, and to get your Tournament Registration Form go to The South Dakota American Legion web-site at: [www.sdlegion.org/2014-sd-american-legion-golf-tourney- 2/](http://www.sdlegion.org/2014-sd-american-legion-golf-tourney-2/) or contact questions can be directed to State Legion Athletic Commissioners Elton Blemaster, Ph.: 605-280-2023 or Gene Gillen, Ph: 605-415-0085, or to Tournament Committee Chairman Jim Kurtz, Ph: 605-594-6492 or email: jekurtz@alliancecom.net.

MILITARY NIGHT AT SKY ZONE

Military Night at Sky Zone

Thursday, September 11

3:00 – 8:00 pm

Receive a free one hour jump pass with
Military ID and purchase of socks
(Immediate family – mom, dad, kids)



Tickets may be purchased
in advance at Sky Zone
or at the event (no on-line ticket sales)



Based on availability

SD WARRANT OFFICER NAMED ONE OF THE NATION'S BEST

The National Guard Association of the United States recognized South Dakota Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brett Anderson as an Eagle Rising Award recipient during the 136th General Conference in Chicago, August 22-25.

The Eagle Rising Award, established in 2011, recognizes the achievements and dedicated service of Army National Guard warrant officers.

"Mr. Anderson was nominated for this award because of his outstanding leadership and technical skills as a property accounting technician and for his volunteer service in his community," said Howard Dressler, president of the National Guard Association of South Dakota.

Anderson enlisted in the SDARNG 25 years ago and attained the rank of Sgt. 1st Class before being appointed as a warrant officer in 2003.

"As a former enlisted soldier he understands the role of every person in his unit and uses that understanding to determine how to best employ others to accomplish their mission," said Dressler.

Anderson's exceptional leadership skills were shown when he volunteered for a deployment to Kuwait in 2009-2010 to serve as the base sustainment officer-in-charge for the 1/147th Field Artillery.

"During the deployment he demonstrated extraordinary leadership skills as a mentor, advisor and technical go-to expert for the senior noncommissioned officers and line officers," said Dressler.

Anderson said receiving this award makes him reflect on his career and is thankful for those who have helped him along the way.

"My wife, Michelle, has consistently supported me throughout my career and I am fortunate to have worked with a lot of great people who have taken time to impart their knowledge and experience," said Anderson.

In order to be nominated for the Eagle Rising Award one has to be a member of the National Guard Association and their state's association.

"I always look for the next challenge or opportunity to participate," said Anderson, a member of both associations. "A mentor once told me 'If you're going to be in the organization then you need to be "in" the organization.'"

In addition to Anderson's military career he is actively involved in the community of Rapid City, where he volunteers his time at Calvary Lutheran Church as a teacher and mentor. He also participates in Leadership Rapid City, where community leaders gather to build and enhance a strong network of leaders.

"Receiving the NGAUS Eagle Rising Award is a great honor, given the extreme professionalism and dedicated service of the entire Army National Guard Warrant Officer Corps," said Anderson.



VABHHCS SEEKING VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS TO MEET VETERAN TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

The VA Black Hills Health Care System's (VABHHCS) Volunteer Transportation Program is seeking volunteers who want to help their fellow Veterans. Volunteer drivers are needed to provide transportation for veterans in the Pierre area who may need care at VA health care facilities. This transportation service program is supported by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization by the donation of vehicles and coordination of scheduling throughout the nation-wide VA health care system.

"Transportation is often a challenge for veterans receiving care at VA facilities. The Volunteer Transportation Program makes that easier by providing van service originating from and traveling to appointments at VA facilities," said Cheryl Rieniets, Volunteer Coordinator, VABHHCS. The volunteer drivers are unpaid positions that return a wealth of satisfaction in a 'job well done.' Drivers should expect to make a full-day commitment on the days they are assigned to drive the van.

Persons interested in volunteering must be screened and pass pre-qualification requirements. The screening process for drivers can be lengthy and includes; completing an application with supporting documentation, taking a driver's physical and TB test from VA Employee Health, fingerprinting for a background check, and proof of a valid driver's license and insurance coverage. There is no cost for the required tests. The DAV and VA BHHCS Voluntary Services Office work together to manage the process for volunteer screening and placement.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Cheryl Rieniets, Voluntary Services Specialist at 605-347-7206 or 1-800-743-1070 extension 7206 or, Pat, local van coordinator at 605-280-1936.

SDDVA STAFF PARTICIPATE IN DSS LONG TERM CARE CONFERENCE

The SDDVA Field staff attended and presented at the SD Department of Social Services Long Term Care Conference this week in Chamberlain.

SDDVA staff provided at SDDVA 101 overview and then briefed attendees on: pension, DIC, Medicaid, and A&A/housebound.

This conference afforded our field staff the opportunity to network with their DSS counterparts for each of their respective territories.



SDDVA TAKES ALS ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) staff accepted the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge from SDDVA Program Manager Heather Henderson.

On Wednesday, Aug. 27, SDDVA staff from Pierre, Rapid City, South Falls and Hot Springs gathered on the steps of the State Capitol to complete the challenge.

"Our SDDVA staff has a legacy of serving South Dakota's veterans 24/7, and that is their number one priority," said SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman. "In addition, our employees are very involved in the communities they reside in and volunteerism is part of their daily routine. We are proud that our employees are teaming up to support efforts to further research for Lou Gehrig's disease."

Prior to completing the challenge, Secretary Zimmerman challenged the employees at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and all State Department of Veterans Affairs staff to complete the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

In addition to completing the challenge, SDDVA staff donated \$250 to the ALS Research Fund.



VETERANS DAY THE SD STATE FAIR

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman delivers message to veterans at the South Dakota State Fair last Thursday, a day designated as "Veterans Day at the State Fair." In his remarks Zimmerman shared success stories from Operation RAV—Reaching all Veterans. Governor Dugaard provided an update on the status of the construction of the state veterans home. Both concluded their remarks with a "thank you" to veterans and their families for their service to this great country.

SDDVA Program Manager Steve Oliva operated a RAV booth that day and had the opportunity to make contact with numerous veterans about benefits and services available.

Staff from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home manned a booth during the Fair, using this opportunity to educate veterans and their families about the Home and the opportunities it affords.

Representatives from the Veterans Service Organizations also manned a booth during the Fair and were available to respond to veterans questions.

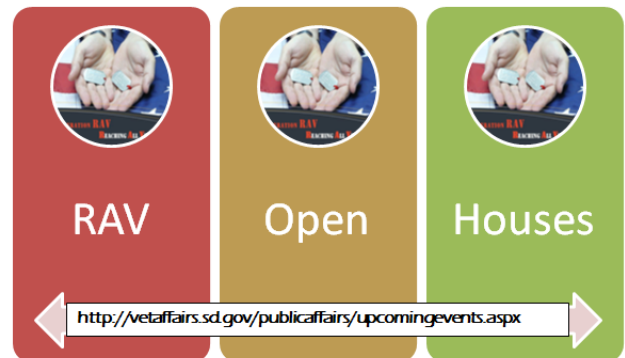
Upcoming Events

2014

Sept. 11—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Wagner—9:00 am
Sept. 14—Veterans Trap Shoot Competition—Spearfish—11:30 am
Sept. 19—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux Falls
Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am
Oct. 17— Women Veterans Conference—Holiday Inn City Centre in Sioux Falls

SD Veterans Service Officers Association Officers

President - Gordon Richard (Spink County)
Secretary/Treasurer - Roy Farabee (Charles Mix and Gregory Counties)
Vice President - Robert Dunsmore (Dewey County and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe)
Judge Advocate - Dennis Evenson (Deuel County)
District I Representative - Mike Wiley (Day County)
District II Representative - Ron Hoffer (Edmunds County)
District III Representative - Terry Cousins (Todd and Tripp Counties)
District IV Representative - Angella Sutton (Meade County)
District V Representative - Geri Opsal (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate)



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